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ABSTRACT

The structure of English departments in Nigerian universities is outlined, the English curricula of seven institutions are examined, and problems associated with English instruction in Nigeria are discussed. Nigeria is in a crisis in English teaching, with a shortage of professional language teachers, phonologists, and phoneticians, inadequate language laboratories and equipment, low student and teacher motivation, confused educational policy, indifference on the part of the government and universities, and public apathy. Controversy exists over the balance of language teaching and literature instruction and over grammar and structural approaches to teaching the language component. The most difficult problem concerns which variety of English to teach, British standard English or the Nigerian pidgin, which is currently in the first of three stages of standardization referred to by Ruge (1986) as reification, totemization, and institutionalization. It is proposed that this language variety is a Nigerian cultural artifact and may hold the key to its national language policy, and that it should be accepted for pedagogical purposes. (MSE)

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On the language-literature equation:
Thoughts on English language teaching in Nigerian Universities

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ABSTRACT

The observations and comments made here apply also to higher education generally.

The paper examines the structure of a typical department of English in a Nigerian university. It also looks at a typical syllabus - specifically at the distribution between English language and literature on the curriculum.

Finally it highlights other problems connected with English language teaching in Nigerian universities. Its conclusion is that by far the most recalcitrant problem has been and continues to be: "Which English shall we teach?"

1. Introduction

Originally entitled "English Language Teaching in Nigeria's Universities: Retrospect and Prospect", this paper was intended for the Fourth International Conference on the Teaching of English to be held under the sponsorship of the International Federation for the Teaching of English in Ottawa, Canada (May 11-16 1986). It has had to be rewritten for this audience. It had also to be extensively revised since the appearance of Dr Munzali Jibril's article under the title "English Language Studies in Nigeria" which was printed in IATEFL Newsletter No.88 on page 16.

Though the primary focus is the teaching of English at university level, it must be stressed a priori that the comments and observations which follow apply generally to higher level education (i.e. tertiary level). The hierarchy of education in Nigeria is four-tiers: primary, secondary, higher and further education. Primary education includes pre-primary (e.g. Kindergarten and nursery schools) and primary schools; secondary encompasses secondary schools, grammar schools, teachers' training schools and vocational schools; higher education spans advanced teachers' colleges/colleges of education, schools of basic/preliminary studies, polytechnics and colleges of technology; and further education refers to university education (i.e. graduate and postgraduate). Under the new 6.3.3.4 system which came into operation in October 1985, there are six years of primary education, three years each for junior and senior secondary, and four years for university education. English is introduced during the second year of primary education as a subject; it becomes the teaching medium a year later.¹

English language teaching has reached a crisis point in Nigeria: shortage of professional language teachers, phonologists and phoneticians;

lack of language laboratories and equipment; lack of motivation among teachers and students; a confused policy; and a nonchalant attitude by the authorities - government and in turn, universities. Add to this the general apathy from a public which has become increasingly disenchanted and has consequently begun to question the relevance of English in "Nigeria of Tomorrow" and you have a complete picture of the state of affairs. But by far the most serious problem concerns the status and direction of our profession (and its practitioners). We started with "Straight for English" many years ago, abandoned this policy for "Mother tongue education" and now there appears to be no clear-cut policy guidelines at all. The so-called government blueprint enshrined in its 1981 document entitled "Federal government's policy on education" vaguely refers to "the language of the immediate environment" as the medium of instruction in the first four years of primary education; in higher education the policy "encourages the use of English" until adequate arrangements have been made for the introduction of the three major indigenous languages - Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo. As a primary school pupil, I remember, that grammar held sway. Consequently drills were emphasized. By the early 1970s it was abandoned for a "better" approach known as STRUCTURALISM. At a conference in 1981 a growing demand was articulated as a resolution for the Federal Ministry of Education - calling for "The place of grammar in our schools". As the sponsors of that resolution demonstrated, what has come to centre-stage in the teaching of English in Nigeria's schools, colleges and universities is, What is the place of grammar?

Besides the controversy between language teaching (grammar) and teaching about language (linguistics), and the growing uneasiness in approaches and methods between grammar model and structural model, there

has been a steadily increasing disquiet over the relationships between language and literature studies. The worry has been, how do we cater for them within a departmental structure and within the curriculum? Finally teachers of English language are worried (and rightly so) about "which English" shall we teach? Nigeria presents a plethora of varieties - British standard, a Nigerian standard, Pidgin, several non-standard varieties and, of course, broken English. The nation's examining body talks of a "West African variety" as the standard to be accepted and taught as a model for public examinations; but it fails to identify, define or describe this standard. Consequently teachers and pupils are confused.

This paper hopes to address itself to some of these problems. It examines the structure of a typical language department - the nomenclature and the concerns of such a department. Then it looks at a typical curriculum of English (the syllabuses of seven universities are examined) to see the weighting/handling of English language and literature. Finally other problems of English language teaching are discussed with regard to Nigeria. Of these the most critical seems to be the question, "Which English shall we teach?"

2. The structure of a Nigerian English department

For a start even the nomenclature shows the signs of confusion. Some departments are designated "the Department of English" (such as Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Universities of Jos, Nsukka, Benin, Lagos and Ibadan). Others prefer to be called "the Department of English and Modern European Languages" (e.g. Bayero University, Kano). Yet others are specifically designated "the Department of English Language" (e.g. University of Ife). The disparities reflect differing approaches

to the language and literature distribution. The preoccupations seem to have been: what do we do about drama and literature? What about linguistics? Then, of course, African languages? The last issue has been resolved by the introduction in most universities today of a separate department of linguistics - catering for linguistics and Nigerian/African languages and literatures. This is the formula adopted in A.B.U., Zaria, Bayero University, Kano, Universities of Sokoto, Jos, Ilorin, Nsukka, Benin, Ibadan, Calabar and Port Harcourt. Yet their respective departments of English teach linguistics! Many universities have nowadays fully-fledged departments of Theatre Arts (these include Benin, Jos, Ife); but in many others drama has continued as a sub-department (e.g. at Zaria, Nsukka and Calabar). The University of Ife has a department of Comparative Literature separate from its department of English Language. The University of Calabar's arrangement - a single Department English and Literary Studies/- seems to adequately summarise the thinking of Nigerian University authorities about the language-literature balance. This thinking was well articulated by Professor Biodun Adetugbo (University of Lagos' one-time head of the English Department). He described the Ife arrangement - separating language from literature - as "madness".²

The Ahmadu Bello University's department of English offers three degrees - in Language, Literature and Drama; the Universities of Jos and Nsukka offer a BA (Honours) degree with "specializations" in the three areas. This is the general picture. However, a language course entitled "the Use of English" is compulsory in the first and second years in these universities.

2.1 The structure of the curriculum

English degree syllabuses do not help matters much because they are usually literature-dominated. The few universities which offer language specialization options tend to teach more linguistics than English language proper.³

Three major problems are discernible from an examination of a typical English syllabus of degree awarding institutions in Nigeria. These were highlighted in a paper which Dr (Mrs) Ndahi and I presented at the 1981 annual conference of the Nigeria English Studies Association (N.E.S.A.)⁴ and in Jibril's paper quoted above. Firstly because of poor language background much teaching time at degree level is taken up in remedial work for the first two years of university education. The rest of the time is used for linguistics rather than advanced developmental work. Consequently English language teaching suffers. And teachers and students find this frustrating, students because they want something new instead of compositions, precis and comprehension; teachers because they feel that this is not their duty, students should have covered such ground before coming in. Moreover practically/- several hours of teaching the work load is enormous coupled with an enormous number of scripts to mark, and preparation to be made such as fishing out suitable passages etc! Many teachers feel that these duties can be better catered for by a "Language Centre" or a "Use of English" department. Yet even in universities with such provision there is frustration for teachers - their promotion prospects and conditions of service nowhere compare with the demands of the job. And the authorities have paid no attention to demands that this is a specialist area needing enormous financial and manpower resources and an independent structure separate from that of a research and teaching department.

A typical syllabus of a department of English in a typical Nigerian university today will have the following structure. (This is simplified in order to show the language-literature distribution in course options.)

(Source: Department of English, A.B.U., Zaria, Undergraduate Brochure)

Year One

English Language 1

Introduction to Literature

Laboratory work/Introduction to phonology

(Any two other options from two other departments)

Year Two

BA Language

English Language II

Introduction to Linguistics

Introduction to phonology

(Any one course outside the department)

BA Literature

English Language II

Introduction to African Literature

Practical criticism

(Any one course outside the department)

Year Three

BA Language

Semantics

Advanced syntax

Stylistics

Sociolinguistics

English language in Nigeria

Original composition

BA Literature

African literature

Novel in 19th and 20th centuries

Classical poetry

Romantic poetry

Elizabethan drama

Stylistics

Original composition

This is extracted from the brochure which the department of English at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, distributes to its freshmen on registration. The same information is published in the university's prospectus

which is published yearly and sent out along with application forms to prospective applicants. It shows that there is only one language course in Years One and Two; and none in the final year of the degree programme. But even this - taught two hours a week plus another hour a week for tutorials - is devoted to remedial work. This has left both students and teachers dissatisfied. There have been complaints about the standard of English which students speak and write - in tutorials, essays and examinations. (Complaints of fallen standards in education generally, but in English specifically, have become legion and national.) So frequent have these complaints become recently that the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, A.B.U., Zaria, asked the British Council to undertake a "study of the English language problems" of its students. The study undertaken by one Mr Bernard Coffey, of the British Council, and published as "The report of the British Council on the English language problems of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Ahmadu Bello University", confirmed that students were weak in spoken (especially) and written English. It recommended the setting up of a Language Centre with a career structure different from a typical university department. Two years have passed, yet no action has been taken to implement the recommendations. Various university committees take turns to debate the issues raised in the report. And this in spite of the declaration of the British Council to help set up the centre, provide resources and run the place for the first five years in addition to training Nigerian staff! No advanced language work, such as is contained in Quirk et al's A University Grammar of English, is done.

The syllabus also demonstrates the skewed weighting in favour of literature and linguistics - in what is left. The Language Arts section of the department of Education - specifically created by the Federal

Government to "mass produce" teachers for its Universal Primary Education and its Literacy by the Year 2000 programme - also shows similar bias in favour of literature and/or linguistics. A final observation must be made regarding the stylistics course in Year Three. This course has always been taught either as a practical criticism course or as literary, NOT linguistics, stylistics. So it cannot be considered a language option strictly speaking.

"Until the middle of the 1960s, at the earliest, it was axiomatic in the teaching profession at all levels that the study of literature properly constituted the substance of academic syllabuses in modern languages"

(Nigel Reeves, "The uses of literature: reflections on the role and future of literary study in foreign language syllabus" in The Linguist: Journal of the Institute of Linguists Vol.25 No.1 Winter 1986, p.12)

Until 1976 Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, had a single department of English and Modern Languages, offering an honours degree - BA English. (French was the only other modern language offered in the department.) During the 1976/7 academic year, the departments of French and Nigerian/African Languages, were created out of the existing structure. The syllabus reproduced above represents to a large degree (except for the introduction of Introduction to Linguistics, Introduction to Phonology in the second year; and the linguistics courses - Semantics, Socio-linguistics and Stylistics - in the final year) the curriculum of the department at the time. There were also course options in Drama - then taught as Dramatic Literature, as opposed to Theatre Studies which is its orientation today. The picture of the syllabus up to 1976 is generally true today in most Nigerian university departments of English. It is truer still of lower levels of education - certainly of the

syllabus for Ordinary Level and Advanced Level examinations (i.e. S.C.E., G.C.E.: O/L and A/L). It is also largely true of tertiary education especially the Advanced Teachers' Colleges/Colleges of Education.

But a deep division of opinion has emerged. On the one hand there has been a growing disenchantment among students with literary studies. Many teachers at all levels of education, but particularly at higher education, have found a significant number of students, at best unhappy about devoting the majority of their time to literature, and at worst resisting extensive reading. Surprised at the growing popularity of the language degree at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, since 1978 I have every year asked my students and colleagues for an explanation. (This popularity can be judged from the enrolment figures for second and third years respectively. They have tripled since 1978.) The response has often been "There is too much to read in literature". (Of course, this has had a negative effect resulting in poor performance among students who opt for the Language degree precisely for this reason.) Many soon discover that "language" is not as simple (in the sense of less challenging intellectually) as they had thought. Besides "there appears to be much more to read"! This concern is not restricted to higher education. "There is plainly widespread disquiet in the schools about the heavy emphasis ... on literature" (Reeves: Ibid, p.12). On the other hand there is a body of colleagues across the spectrum of education who are concerned about the dominance of literature. (There are also those colleagues who staunchly uphold the virtues of literary studies. Attitudes such as "What is there to study in language anyway?" represents typical stereotypes.)

This rift in opinion is clearly exemplified by the disagreement which came to the fore at the Birmingham University conference in March

1984. The theme of the gathering appropriately was "Responding to change: Modern languages today". Dr Michael Butler's reaction to the suggestion by the Matriculation Board to examine literature as an optional part of the assessed course work was cryptic. To him, "the proposals signalled a growing Philistinism, as shown in their shift away from compulsory, examinable literary study". Literature, he argued, "revealed language at its most intense, powerful and perspective; literature could stretch the mind and the imagination, throw light on history and convey the richness of human experience" (Ibid p.13). Teachers riposted by suggesting that Dr Butler had not been inside a school for many years and that if his prescriptions were followed "there would be no modern language left".

3. Lack of laboratories and equipment

Worse still, there are no functioning teaching laboratories and equipment. Yet our degrees are Bachelor of English Language degrees! Only a few universities can boast of a working language laboratory - these include the Universities of Ibadan and Ife. The laboratory in Ahmadu Bello University's department of English broke down in 1976 and has not been repaired; its second laboratory situated in the school of Basic Studies has a seating capacity of twenty; and it is shared by the departments of Education (language Arts section) and French, in addition to English and the School of Basic Studies. Other equipment, such as cassette tape recorders, overhead projectors, television sets, video (and computers), are unavailable. There is no computer-assisted language learning going on and only a few universities have centres for educational technology that can provide service (of a limited type) for language classrooms.

This leads to the issue of staffing and funding for education generally and language teaching/learning in particular. This issue relates, I think, to the philosophy of English education: the debate about the relative importance of personal development versus the imparting and mastery of particular skills deemed useful or socially necessary; the politics of English education, especially the issue of external authority over policy; and the implementation of curricular change. Recently government has continued to cut funds and last year it set up a committee for the "Rationalization of University Departments". This committee is to, among other things, streamline our educational system - a euphemism for recommending the abolition of "redundant departments". In a society which is stereotypically biased against English language and which has questioned its retention as a subject and a teaching medium, the signals are clear, the writing on the wall is unmistakeable.⁵

Shortage of funds has meant that teachers cannot be trained or re-trained, obsolete equipment cannot be replaced, nor can broken-down ones be put to use again. The culminative effect of all these has been a steady decline in teaching standards. This has proved to be a vicious cycle: poorly trained university language teachers produce in turn badly-trained language Arts teachers for tertiary level, who pass this on to their teacher-trainees who, on graduation, become teacher-trainers for secondary and primary levels of education. So that the mediocrity is perpetuated. And yet the authorities are the first to complain of "falling standards"!⁶

4. Relevance and pedagogy: What future for Nigeria's graduates of English?

Moreover, the teaching profession has become very unattractive. Coupled with the feeling of a public which is increasingly asking about

the "place of English language in Nigeria of tomorrow", the problems which English language teaching faces today are weighty indeed. Nigerian undergraduates are becoming obsessed with the question of relevance and pedagogy: questions such as "What opportunities exist for me on graduation?" have become many. In a country where there is no career guidance for students, where many take up teaching as a last resort, where job opportunities have thinned out especially in the foreign service and the media - places which traditionally avidly employed English graduates - the question of societal relevance can no longer be ignored or overlooked. But can we provide answers - let alone satisfactory answers - to these legitimate demands? Moreover we must, in addition, do a re-think of the issue of the relationship of English as a school subject to university English studies, and especially to university level literary studies. Do we want, for example, just enough English for literary studies at universities; or do we definitely require a degree in English?

This also touches on the debate regarding the definition of the canon of English literature and the place in that canon of national English language literatures. Though African literature is now at the heart of the literature curriculum, the question "What is African literature?" remains unanswered. Is it, as some scholars argue, literature about Africa written by Africans; or should it, and must it, be written in an African medium as espoused by Professor Obi Wali; or indeed in an indigenized form of the language of the ex-colonial master, often a world language as Professor Chinua Achebe advocates. All sides have their merits. As the authorities vacillate many of the world languages which served as the language of the ex-colonial masters in Africa are being standardized and vernacularized for literacy. And African pidgins and creoles are also being given increased attention as possible media for the expression of African thought patterns and

processes. In Nigeria literary creative writers are experimenting with pidgin (for example, Aig Imouhkide's A Pot of Soup and Other Poems. Pidgin has become popular in soap opera and what is now becoming street drama or theatre for development.) But by far the most popular works are written in standard Nigerian English.

5. Approaches to research in English education

Two other problems must be considered before we move to the central question of "Which English shall we teach?" These relate to issues of approaches to research in English education, especially the justification and consequences of different models of research as these apply to English and language Arts; and English language development during school (i.e. university) years and after. There is the question of evaluation and assessment as well. Regarding models, two points must be borne in mind: one, that in Nigeria English functions as the dominant national language and a major language of education; two, English education in the face of multiculturalism. For many people in Nigeria English is a third, fourth, sometimes a fifth, language. Yet it is taught and learnt as a second language. In multicultural areas English language teaching profession has a responsibility towards students from cultural minorities who are thought to be currently typically at a disadvantage in English classes. How far is this true of minorities in Nigeria? How effective are the traditional models - grammar approach versus the structuralist approach? Do we need to abandon these paradigms and search for other options? Have language immersion programmes any relevance for Nigeria?

The second issue - language development in the school years - relates to the place of computers in English education, writing, speaking and examinations. For example, to take one of these issues, how relevant

is communicative language teaching as opposed to grammatical competence to Nigeria?

Evaluation and assessment - examinations - touch on the issue of Standard which is treated in the next section.

6. Which English shall we teach?

The definition of standard, in relation both to the growing acceptance of emerging national varieties of English as valid national standards, and also in relation to the debate over the responsibilities of the school in relation to the student's home language (mother tongue). The question "Which English shall we teach?" can be differently asked in the form, "Which standard shall we teach?" This in turn can be rephrased as: What norm shall we teach? Here our approach is to define standard as norm?

There are several norms, hence several Englishes, in Nigeria. At one level of discourse we can distinguish a social norm, a teaching norm etc. A teaching norm emphasizes grammaticality - correct usage; a social norm places more stress on acceptability; what is the actual linguistic behaviour of the society. In both there are stereotypes. At another level of argument, we can talk of the norm of the street, the norm of the market place, the norm of the government etc.

At whatever level of argument, norms are ultimately prescriptive and they rest on the issue of standardization. The passages below are pieces of writing from Nigeria - all in English. They form our bases for the discussion of norms, of standardization (and, by implication, vernacularization for literacy).

Excerpt 1

"Feel at home", "Come again",
they say, and when I come
again and feel
at home, once, twice,
there will be no thrice -
for then I find doors shut on me.

So I have learned many things, son.
I have learned to wear many faces
like dresses - home face, cock-
tail-face, with all their conforming smiles
like a fixed portrait smile.

And I have learned too
to laugh with only my teeth
and shake hands without my heart.

I have also learned to say, "Goodbye"
when I mean "Good riddance";
to say "Glad to meet you"
without being glad; and to say "It's been
nice talking to you", after being bored.

But believe me, son.

I want to be what I used to be
when I was like you, I want
to unlearn all these muting things.

Most of all, I want to relearn
how to laugh in the mirror
shows only my teeth like a snake's bare fangs!

So, show me, son,
how to laugh; show me how
I used to laugh and smile
once upon a time when I was like you.

Once upon a time, Gabriel Okara

Excerpt 2

A quaint anomaly, had long governed and policed itself, was so singly-knit that it obtained a tax assessment for the whole populace and paid it before the departure of the pith-helmeted assessor, in cash, held all property in common, literally, to the last scrap of thread on the clothing of each citizen - such an anachronism gave much patronising amusement to the cosmopolitan sentiment of a profit-hungry society. A definitive guffaw from the radical centres of debate headed by Ilosa, dismissed Aiyero as the prime example of unscientific communalism, primitive and embarrassingly sentimental. To the governments that came and went it posed neither threat nor liability. Thus it was that Aiyero, unique beneficiary of a three-quarter century of accidental isolation was permitted to be itself. Until its rediscovery at the time of the census the tourists swamped Aiyero, then the sociologists armed with erudite irrelevances. Even the Corporation, intent on its ever-expanding cocoa drive took note of a new market for cocoa-bix and cocoa-wix. Ofeyi, the promotions man took his team down to Aiyero.

Why did they all always come back? Aiyero's young generation Ofeyi meant, asking the question of Pa Ahime. What makes all your youth come back?

The Elders of Aiyero, adopting the wisdom of its parent body Aiyetomo, sent Aiyero's young men all over the world to experience other mores and values. Income from boat-building provided Aiyero's main income but these young men also sent back a portion of their earnings to the communal fund. It was an act of faith by the commune to send the restless generation to work at ...

A season of anomy, Wole Soyinka
Lagos, Nelson Books, 1980, p.1

Excerpt 3

Dear Sir,

With much pleasre and respect I inscribe you this few lines and with the hope that it will meet you in good condition of health.

The reason why I write you is to tell you about my work which I wrote the first to you sir and I have resign from Textile work and go for Electronic Servise that is radio and T.V. mechanic for three year and its remain for my money for apprenticeship and books and tools so next Monday is the last promise we made for my work before I start that I will complete both money and books - tools, but I have recived the list from Manager, and all my mates there have paid their money, and if I beg them to manage with them to study with their books manager will tell me to buy my own so I beg you by the name of God to help me for the money and books and tools and I hope that you will help me and I don't want to miss this work at all.

I am yours truely,

David

A Bamgbose in J Spencer (ed), 1972, p.36

Excerpt 4

Mai hosband no riplai di leta til nau. So na him mek mi se ai go kom tel yu as yu go go Pot Haakot dis komin Satude. Mek yu tel mai hosband se mek him fain smol tin giv os, bikos ai no no hau ai go du am as faam ... faam sizin kom laik dis. Wi no get eni ples to faam. And ai don tel mai hosband se mek him bring moni mek wi tek am bai di ples we wi go .. go plant ... kasava. Mai hosband no gri kom hom. So ai no no hau ai go du am. So if yu go Pot Haakot on dis komin Satude, yu go tel am se mek him fain foti naira bring fo os. Se ai don si di faam we wi go bai. Di man kom tel mi se if ai no kom kwik, him go sel am fo anoda pesin. So if hi sel di faam fo anoda pesin nau hau wi go du am? Abi mi and mai pikin dem wi no go chop?

Dat ... dat kobo ndiya we dem de plant so, mi ai no get am sef ...

"Rivers state Pidgin", I N Azuma
MA thesis, A.B.U., Zaria, Nigeria, 1985, p.191

For various reasons, for example theoretical, fieldwork research, method of analysis etc., the data (passages quoted above) are taken from written materials. The sources are as follows:

1. Gabriel Okara: a poem
2. Wok Soyinka: a piece from A season of anomy
3. Ayo Bamgbose: quoted in Spencer (ed) 1972, p.36
4. I N Azuma: "Rivers state Pidgin", MA thesis, A.B.U., 1985, p.191

The first and third extracts are examples of non-standard Nigerian English. This is the variety found in Amos Tutuola's novels and particularly the tradition of literary creative writing which has come to

be known collectively as Onitsha Pamphlet Literature - probably because when they first appeared in the early sixties they were commonly sold around the Onitsha Market. (Onitsha Market was a very popular market in West Africa until it was gutted by fire in the seventies.) The second excerpt illustrates standard educated Nigerian English - this variety is associated with serious creative writing in Nigeria. It is the language of writers like Chinua Achebe, Isidore Okpehwo, Kole Omotosho etc. The fourth is an example of pidgin. Nigerian pidgin has become popular as the language of soap opera and is used effectively by Aig Imoukhede in his A pot of soup and other poems and Tunde Lakoju in Moonshine solidarity. Several light-hearted magazines (e.g. "Ikebe Super"), cartoon strips (e.g. Pappy Joe in a daily entitled "The Nigeria Standard"), and columnists in some of the nation's weekly newspapers (e.g. "The Lagos Weekend") are written in Nigerian Pidgin. Broken English has remained mainly a restricted code, an instant pidgin, used as a trade language in the urban markets. Many have claimed that it possesses no syntactic structure; that it is a string of words loosely jumbled together and is largely helped by paralinguistic devices to help communication. Others have described it as "patois" or "playground" pidgin English. Finally there is British Standard English spoken by the few British still in employment in Nigeria and by the few Nigerians who have been born, brought up and had all, or part of, their education in Britain but have had to return home recently. The question for teachers, pupils, planners and administrators therefore is: which of these varieties should be taught?

The attitude of Nigerians to this question is interesting. There are those who consider the varieties of Nigerian English as dialects of

British standard English and would therefore seek explanation within the framework of English dialectology. There are others who see themselves as theoretical linguists and see Nigerian English from the standpoint of a universal grammar. The first set of attitudes accepts some standard English (by which is meant British standard or International English) as the model language; the second set will reject such an attitude and claim that a Nigerian English exists as a sociolinguistic fact. There is yet a third set of attitudes typified by those Nigerians who appear to be socially neutral, but "in their neutrality" have failed to "give the kind of guidance teachers and policy-makers are looking for ...". These attitudes provide some basis for a consideration of norms and standards. However, it should be remembered that "the data available to each set is similar though their ideological and theoretical stances will influence their interpretation".

My feeling is that rather than vituperate about Nigerian English, we should accept what has become inevitable - i.e. that Nigerian English exists. This variety is often associated with educated Nigerians. This concession is essential as a starting point in a process of standardization and vernacularization. National and regional Englishes have come to stay (this fact was recognized by the resolution adopted at the end of the 1978 Hawaii Conference). What Nigerian linguists need to do is to standardize their national variety. Three stages are involved: what Le Page (1986) has referred to as reification, totemization and institutionalization.

Reification refers to the question of definition and identification. For example, in 1972 the West African Examinations Council took over the functions of the Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate thus taking over the Ordinary Level, Advanced Level (GCE and SCE), RSA, City and Guilds

etc. This raised the problem: Who is to say what is, and what is not, acceptable usage? There are those who say standard British English is good enough, Nigerian English is a pidginized non-standard form. These overlook the fact that none of the teachers, especially at lower levels of education, actually use British Standard English. Totemization involves codifying the lexicon (a dictionary) and writing the grammar of Nigerian English. This is the most difficult linguistic part to do. Finally, institutionalization involves a policy decision. This rests with government; and it is often a political decision. Linguists often cannot influence, let alone determine this. This issue relates to government language policy in education and its national language policy.

7. Conclusion

English language teaching in Nigeria is faced with several difficulties - not least among which is the question: Which variety of English shall we teach? For the moment teachers and pupils are confused because of the lack of clear-cut guidelines.

However, many Nigerians are beginning to accept the concept of a Nigerian English - a variety identified as standard Nigerian English and associated with educated Nigerians. This is the beginning of a three-stage process of standardization. What remains is the "totemization and institutionalization" of this variety for pedagogical purposes. This variety is the modern Nigerian's cultural artefact; it may hold the key to the country's National Language Policy problem.

Footnotes

- 1 This is the general picture though certain modifications occur. For example, the ten northern states have "gone straight for English" since 1972 or thereabouts (i.e. English medium school right from day one of schooling), whereas the southern states have emphasized "mother tongue in early education, English later". This contradiction in policy and practice - mother tongue versus English medium - is examined later in the paper.
- 2 Professor Adetugbo in a personal communication. His feeling, which he went on to state, is that you cannot teach a language without its literature. To me, this sounds reasonable. Literature provides vital ingredients for the teaching of language; it is a vital aspect of the use and preservation of language.
- 3 Munzali Jibril, "English Language Studies in Nigeria", IATEFL Newsletter Number 88 (August 1985) p.16.
- 4 Kujara Ndahi and A E Odumuh, "Towards an English language syllabus for Nigerian universities". Paper presented at the XIVth Annual Conference of the Nigerian English Studies Association (NESA), Bayero University, Kano, April 1983.
- 5 Two examples of such stereotypical attitudes may be cited here. One, in 1975, in the course of debate over how the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at A.B.U., Zaria, should be restructured, a faculty member was reported to have called for the abolition of the department of English on the grounds that it is an anathema. Two, in December 1983, an accountant of one

of the leading banking institutions in Bendel state had called the author a "holder of a doctorate degree in a field irrelevant to Nigeria of the 80s"; while in March 1981, in a paper presented to the Nigeria English Studies Association Annual Conference, English had been described as "the bane of Nigeria's democracy". Dr Niyi Osundare, in that paper, had asked for the discontinuation of English as an educational medium.

- 6 The ill-effects of poor training on standards is highlighted by Mr Awa Nwoke in his "Instructional supervision in English language teaching in Nigerian secondary schools", IATEFL Newsletter Number 88, pp 26-7.

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